



# Safety Sense



FY 2014, 6th Edition

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## Spring time: Motorcycle Safety Courses available to you

Soldiers of the SDARNG who elect to ride a motorcycle should take a few minutes to consider all the facts. Things like riding without a helmet, aggressive operations, not performing regular maintenance and safety checks and drinking and driving account for a good percentage of motorcycle accidents and fatalities. Your bike may be your primary transportation, a source of recreation, a hobby or show piece, but if you or your bike aren't prepared for the trip, you may find yourself on the side of the road or worse yet, in the middle of it.

The first thing is mental preparation. As you drive in your car or truck, do you notice how other operators act: cut in and out of traffic, run a stop light or sign, race their vehicle, texting and driving or other distracted operations? The list can go on, and we are all subject to their actions. On a motorcycle you have little protection against these people, and to reduce that by not wearing appropriate PPE is to multiply that risk. You must stay focused and aware.

Your motorcycle mechanical operation is another consideration. Most maintenance and regular service will identify a problem before it can become catastrophic. Have your bike serviced by a professional mechanic. If you do it yourself, make sure you follow the manufacturer's recommendation. Each and every ride needs to include a TCLOCS inspection. The first 5 Soldiers who have completed the Motorcycle Safety Course to e-mail the State Safety Technician with the correct acronym will earn a Safety PT bag or back pack.

Training is always the best thing as you prepare for a season of riding. The basic rider course is for the beginner. If you want to get a motorcycle and don't have the skills, or just don't have a license yet, the SOHO can assist. Once you make the decision to become a rider, go on line to <http://www.southdakotasafetycouncil.org/motorcycle/> and click on the "On-line Registration". You will need to create an account then choose a course in your area that meets your schedule. Once you pay for the course (\$75.00), all you must do is attend and complete. Once you complete the training, create a DTS voucher for the registration cost only and submit it to the State Safety Office for approval. You must scan and include a copy of the receipt and course completion card as substantiating documents.

The Basic course is a 15 hour class over a weekend or 5 consecutive evenings. You need only arrive with a pen/pencil, DOT approved helmet, appropriate eye protection, long sleeve shirt or jacket, leather palmed gloves, long, sturdy pants and over the ankle boots. The bike and fuel are provided for the class. After some basic safety information, instructors take you through the crawl, walk and run training. Once complete, a) take your course completion card to the Department of Public Safety, Drivers Licensing Division and your license will be endorsed for motorcycle (there is a non-reimbursable fee), b) forward a copy of the card to your auto insurance company and most will provide you a discount on your policy. The following calendar year, a rider may take the Experienced Rider Course.

The Experienced Rider Course is 4-5 hours long and you must bring all the same PPE with you, as well as your own motorcycle. The course will teach you new skills or refresh those that may not have been used for a while. Course registration and reimbursement (\$60.00) is the same however, an experienced rider may retake the course after 3 years and receive reimbursement.

For questions you can contact the State Safety Office or the South Dakota Safety Council at 1-800-952-5539.

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## Admin personnel, March is Eye Safety Month:

With so many people using computers at work and at home, complaints of eye strain, difficulty focusing and discomfort have become commonplace in doctors' offices.

One of the main reasons for this is — although offices have marched into the age of technology, not much else has. People are still using the same lighting, furniture and desk configurations they had when using typewriters.

To mark March as Workplace Eye Safety Month, the American Academy of Ophthalmology has put together some tips to help us alleviate some of the eye problems modern technology has given birth to. They are:

- First and most important — **get an eye exam** by your ophthalmologist, who can rule out the possibility of eye disease as the cause of your symptoms. You could simply need glasses when

working at a computer, or your prescription might need updating;

- **Screen distance** — you should sit approximately 20 inches from the computer monitor, a little further than you would for reading distance, with the top of the screen at or below eye level.

- **Equipment** — choose a monitor that tilts or swivels, and has both contrast and brightness controls;

- **Furniture** — an adjustable chair is best;

- **Reference materials** — keep reference materials on a document holder so you don't have to keep looking back and forth, frequently refocusing your eyes and turning your neck and head;

- **Lighting** — modify your lighting to eliminate reflections or glare. A hood

or micromesh filter for your screen might help limit reflections and glare; and

- **Rest breaks** — take periodic rest breaks, and try to blink often to keep your eyes from drying out.

Another thing to remember is that the forced-air heating systems in big office buildings can increase problems with dry eyes during the winter months. The usual symptoms of dry eye are stinging or burning eyes, scratchiness, a feeling that there's something in the eye, excessive tearing or difficulty wearing contact lenses.

Over-the-counter eye drops, called artificial tears, usually help, but if dry eye persists, see your eye doctor for an evaluation.

— Lyn Wagner —



## Setting a new standard

While being safe in all manner of things is everyone's job, leaders play a critical role in setting the example. This goes for all of our on-duty and off-duty activities. Engaging in recreational activities that carry with it an inherent risk may be fun and exciting, but leaders must encourage preparation, practice and common sense. Riding motorcycles, for example, is a great activity, but it does come with high risks, even when doing everything correctly.

To recklessly engage in an activity that already comes with risks would be like skydiving without checking your chute. All too often we take many activities for granted. Such things as simple as driving. Operating a vehicle on the roads is a privilege not to be taken lightly that carries a large amount of responsibility. Yet many Soldiers as well as leaders are observed operating their private motor vehicle in a manner not respectful of the Army Values. Speeding, aggressive lane changes, and distracted driving are not safe and not the example that needs to be set. If we observed a Soldier operating an Army Motor Vehicle in this manner, we should be counseling them on safe operations. It's a poor message to walk away from that and then drive our PVM home in the same way.

As a leader, if you condone or practice this type of activity, you help to set the wrong standard.

BE safe, KNOW what's right, DO what's right.